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Naaman
...because of a young slave girl
based on 2 Kings 5:1-15
by Ralph Milton
from [Is This Your Idea of a Good Time, God?](#)
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This is a miracle story. Not the healing of Naaman's leprosy, but the miracle of ways in which God uses people at the very bottom of the social ladder, such as a foreign, female, child, slave.

It was dark as pitch. Miriam lay on her mat, listening to her mistress toss back and forth in her bed in the next room.

"Miriam!"

"I'm coming, ma'am."

Miriam had been expecting the call. She had been called every night for months now. Her mistress would fall into a fitful sleep, then wake a few hours later, tense, tired and frightened.

Even the smoky oil lamp seemed bright to Miriam's eyes as she emerged from the darkness of her little cell. "May I rub your back ma'am?" she asked.

"Yes, Miriam. Gently!" Ghazal's voice was tired. Miriam could hardly hear it, but it didn't matter. She had done this every night. Her strong, young hands moved firmly, gently along the knotted muscles in Ghazal's neck and shoulders.

Ghazal's shoulders sagged, relaxed just a little from the burden of fear. "It doesn't count for anything, Miriam. Not a thing."

"Ma'am?"

"Money. Status. Power. It doesn't get you anything in the end. They'll throw us away, like so much garbage. In the end, that's what will happen."

"Oh, ma'am. Surely not. Your husband is the Commander of the Army. He serves the king."

"Exactly!" Now there was anger in Ghazal's voice. "He serves the king. Naaman is commander of the army. The second most powerful man in this stupid country. And this man has leprosy! He has stinking, dirty leprosy! You know what they do with people who have leprosy, Miriam. As soon as it gets a bit worse, as soon as he can't cover that spot anymore, as soon as the wounds get ugly, they'll throw him onto the garbage heap. And me with him! Wives are attached to their husbands, so I go too. They'll send us out to live in the caves with the other lepers."

Ghazal fury dissolved into tears – great screaming sobs that shook her whole body. Miriam's fingers continued their quiet ministry to Ghazal's aching shoulders, and the sobs moved into tears of quiet exhaustion.

"Oh Miriam, what would I do without you?" Ghazal reached back over her shoulder and took Miriam's hand. "Sit down, my child."

"How old are you, Miriam?"

"I don't know ma'am. I have been your slave for six winters since the warriors brought me here from Israel. I was very small then."

"You are old and wise beyond your years, Miriam. You are a girl-child, a slave, a Jew, and I couldn't survive all this without you. In your quiet way, you are wise. You seem to understand, and you seem to care about me. How can you possibly care about me, Miriam, when you are my slave and I have the power of life and death over you?"

The older woman looked deep into the dark, sad eyes of the girl. "Perhaps you are wise because you have suffered," said Ghazal. "You were ripped away from your home, your family. You have nothing left, except wisdom. Do we all have to suffer before we can be wise, Miriam?"

Ghazal began to cry again. "I've never suffered anything, Miriam, until now. I was a pampered child. I had wealth and power, or at least as much power as a woman can ever have. I never had to think or do anything for myself, Miriam. Nothing. I've never even had any children, so I don't even know what that is like.

"And now this thing with Naaman's leprosy. My whole world is coming apart, Miriam. They'll send Naaman away soon, when his leprosy spreads. They'll send him off, and then what's going to happen to me? I'll have to go and live in the caves with him? I can't survive in the caves with him. I can't live with him there, Miriam. He's so angry and afraid. He's always been proud and distant. Always the tough, aristocratic male. Now he's in pain and he pushes me away. You know, I haven't been in his bed for months?"

Miriam nodded. Of course she knew. Miriam was a woman in a child's body. She stood up and went behind Ghazal's chair. Again, she massaged the burden from the knotted, hurting neck and shoulders.

"Ma'am!" Miriam said hesitantly.

Ghazal looked up at her.

"I'm sorry ma'am. I was going to say something but it is not my place to make suggestions."

"Oh Miriam. If you have something to suggest that might help, please say it."

"There is a prophet in my home place. He is a prophet of the God of Israel."

"What are you saying, Miriam? Are you saying he can cure leprosy?"

"I'm not sure, ma'am. I've heard it said."

"Do you think there's any chance, Miriam? Do you think there's any chance?"

"A great commander of the army would not accept the word of a Jewish slave girl."

"No, he wouldn't. Naaman is far too proud for that." Ghazal sat for awhile, the urgency, the desperation building inside her. "But he must. Leprosy doesn't respect commanders of the army. Naaman just has to get off his high horse and listen, even to the word of a Jewish slave girl."

For the first time in months, Ghazal stood up straight. She took the oil lamp, tucked her night dress firmly around her, and walked toward the door leading to Naaman's bedroom.

Miriam went back to her mat. She was very tired. Through the small window of her cell she could see the first light of dawn.

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It was light outside one morning when Miriam woke with a start. She had slept right through the night. She had not heard Ghazal stir, had not massaged Ghazal's shoulders, hadn't listened to Ghazal talk. Had Ghazal called and had she not heard?

Miriam rushed to Ghazal's bed. It was empty. It hadn't been slept in. For what seemed like an eternity, Miriam stood there at the bedside, wondering what had happened. What did the empty bed mean? Had Naaman come back? Her body rigid with fear, Miriam waited.

It was late in the morning when Ghazal finally came through the door. She was still in her nightgown. Her face was soft and she was smiling.

"Oh Miriam. He's back. The leprosy is gone, Miriam. He did go to the Jordan river and he's cured." The older woman took the girl in her arms. "Thank you Miriam."

There was a long silence, as the two women sat in each other's embrace. Finally Ghazal spoke again.

"We talked all night, Miriam. We really talked to each other. Among other things, of course." Miriam blushed and Ghazal chuckled.

"There's something that's been healed besides Naaman's leprosy, Miriam. I'm not sure what to call it, but it feels like a miracle. It was the Commander of the Army who went to Israel. But it was a man named Naaman who came back. He's a real man now, not just a swollen ego in a soldier suit.

"Naaman says that Jordan river of yours is just a muddy creek, Miriam. But maybe it soaked off his armor. Naaman says he did a lot of thinking along the way. I guess...I guess that God of yours knew that leprosy wasn't Naaman's main problem."

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